

# MARTIAL LAW IN THE PHILIPPINES TO DATE

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It has been a year and a half since martial law was imposed on the Philippines. After 21 September 1972, a journalist noted the mood in Manila as follows: "There are many in the Philippines who are willing to give the President the benefit of the doubt. There are fewer who are optimistic".<sup>1</sup>

Five months after declaration of martial law, a "letter from Manila" stated that: "The Filipinos are patient people, with a capacity of seeing and enjoying the ludicrous. So, even now, we can have a good laugh over what is going on. Our temperatures are set for a slow burn. So, by and large, we can be sure there will be no explosions in the near future. But the patience even of a Filipino can run out".<sup>2</sup>

A year and a half after martial law, one may ask again what the mood in Manila is. A close friend, a coffee shop habitué who still manages to meet with others to discuss the country's affairs despite fears of rumor-mongering, wrote recently: "Most of us here evaluate the situation in very logical terms -- what are we buying

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and what are we paying? Civil liberties, many of us see as the price for stability and progress. If the loss of liberties is temporary, many of us are willing to pay the price. However, as each day passes and improvements are slow in coming, many are asking if the price is right".

Salvador López, president of the University of the Philippines expressed the situation more eloquently. Knowing that the university faculty and students are most likely to be the ones to question the current situation, he said:

We are running a race with catastrophe. For it is far easier to lose freedom without bloodshed than to regain freedom without bloodshed. One should never assume that a people willing to sacrifice freedom and democracy for the sake of necessary reforms are prepared to bear the sacrifice indefinitely. Quiescence is not necessarily synonymous with tranquility. The crucial problem, therefore, is to determine the precise point at which the sacrifice ceases to be supportable and grievance becomes explosive -- the point, in other words, at which the restitution of civil liberties and the restoration of representative government becomes imperative.<sup>3</sup>

A year and a half later, we may look at the Philippine situation again and evaluate what has happened. Has martial law been beneficial to the Filipinos? Are humor and patience enough to make people wait? Has the price been right, or is it likely to be right in the future?

There are some people, of course, to whom the answer to such questions is clear. Foremost among these are those who believe that liberty and freedom are ideals one never gambles with, at any price. To these people, there is nothing that

can justify martial law. There can only be one evaluation of the present regime in the Philippines -- it is a failure and the time for waiting is long past.

There are those who believe that the situation in the Philippines is so full of false information, propaganda, claims and counter claims, that to embark on a process of evaluating advantages and disadvantages of martial law would be futile. The gulf between those for and against martial law is so wide that it seems unbridgeable. Events in the Philippines so stoke the fires of passionate partisanship that to take a pro and con analytical stance is to invite the ire of both those for and against the current regime.

The language of Philippine politics have always had an all-or-nothing ring to it. Filipino politicians have vowed the "total annihilation" of opponents and the "wiping out" of enemies. They have been known to utter zero-sum threats in a colorful form of verbal overkill. Until recently, however, this was more hyperbole than fact. It is very disturbing therefore, that in the days before and after martial law, the rules of the game seem to have changed. People have actually been killed or jailed. Threats have become violent acts. Political analysis, under such a tension-filled situation has become extremely difficult and risky. Attempts at objective interpretation are seen as lack of commitment or even cowardice. Commitment to one side of the question becomes a

prerequisite to expression of views and not to take sides is to take one side. To the committed partisans, "those who are not with me are against me". One can sincerely and sadly say that if this air of strong passions and emotions continue to permeate the study of politics in the Philippines, scholarship may well become the main casualty of the current Philippine conflict.

Suppose, however, we do ask the question -- what is martial law buying and what is the price? This view point enables us to evaluate the pros and cons of the existing situation in the Philippines.

#### The Pros

Sympathizers of the present regime in the Philippines point to certain advantages which are widely circulated in glossy reports such as One Year of the New Society, Report to the Nation, Philippine Economic Prospects, etc.<sup>4</sup> While some may doubt the accuracy of the reports and dispute the benefits claimed, the following are typical of the advantages claimed by the present regime.

1. Peace and order - the government points to an overall drop of 43 per cent in the crime rate in the first year of martial law. Murder cases were said to have declined by 74 per cent, homicide by 69 per cent, robbery by 54 per cent, and parricide by 48 per cent.<sup>5</sup> About half a million firearms

were allegedly confiscated or surrendered together with 1.5 million rounds of ammunition. Close to 100,000 of the firearms involved were claimed to be high-calibred.<sup>6</sup> The drop in the crime rate was reported most noticeable in Metropolitan Manila, where major crimes decreased by 54 per cent, according to the Manila Metropolitan Police. In the metropolitan area, homicide supposedly decreased by 70 per cent, while murder declined by an astounding 168 per cent. Police Chief Gerardo Tamayo attributed the crime decline to the "saturation campaign" of the MMP, where slum and squatter areas are "zoned" and police characters are arrested. The midnight to four o'clock curfew was also supposed to have helped tremendously.<sup>7</sup>

2. Governmental reform - almost upon declaration of martial law, a proposed Reorganization Act that had been presented to the legislature since March 1972 was decreed into law. About 6,655 employees were allegedly dismissed or retired from the service.<sup>8</sup> It was claimed that graft and corruption, especially in the revenue collecting agencies, were severely curtailed. In a year and a half, the government claims to have saved ₱ 24 million in administrative expenses alone, with personnel reduced by 11 per cent. Noteworthy among the governmental reforms was the creation of the National Economic and Development Authority which now places planning and implementation under the charge of one agency. A Department of Local Government and Community Development was also set up. A whole

system of "think tanks" and "do tanks" was instituted, borrowing heavily from the military's use of the "task force" for solving specific problems and concentrating efforts on problems ranging from rice production to building infrastructures.

3. Land reform - upon declaration of martial law, the whole country was declared a land reform area. To date, however, only 40 of the country's provinces are covered by land reform. Target beneficiaries of land reform are 650,000 tenant farmers. Farmers, however, have to join a village association (samahang nayon) or a co-operative (kilusang bayan) before they are allowed to participate in land reform. It is claimed that about 15,000 village associations have been organized in the first year of martial law but very few co-operatives have been set up because the government believes that the farmers have to be trained in co-operative principles before co-ops are formed. Farmers are also required to build up the capitalization of the co-op through "forced savings" before they are officially organized. An Agrarian Reform Fund of ₱ 7 billion has allegedly been established. Over-all target in the agricultural sector is doubling of rice yields in the so-called Masagana 99 program. New land is also being brought under cultivation in the Palayang Bayan program.<sup>9</sup>

4. Increased revenue - with martial law, the government claims to have cracked down on tax evaders and also declared a number of tax amnesties. Such measures allegedly increased revenues by 73.4 per cent in the year since martial law.<sup>10</sup>

Four Presidential Decrees providing tax amnesties claimed to have netted more than ₱ 830 million. These decrees pardoned people who did not declare incomes in 1971, 1972 and on taxes on motor vehicles, provided they would declare their income and pay their taxes. The good financial position of the government was also bolstered by considerable foreign exchange earnings because of the excellent prices offered for Philippine products. In one year, the international reserves of the Philippines were said to have increased by 223.4 per cent. Most of the improvements in the country's foreign exchange position was also attributed to the limits on international travel imposed by the martial law government.<sup>11</sup>

5. Increased foreign investments - one of the earliest acts of the government after martial law was assuring foreign investors that they were welcome in the Philippines. The entry and outflow of foreign investments were liberalized. Oil exploration permits were readily issued, foreign investors were not required to get any visas, the withholding tax on foreign loans was decreased, and the repatriation of capital and profits by foreign investors was fully guaranteed. The result of all these encouragements was the alleged entry of about 24 multinational corporations into the Philippines, with an aggregate investment of ₱ 707.9 million. A tax free export processing zone was set up in Bataan, where 21 enterprises have been approved, according to the government. Total project costs

of 18 zone enterprises alone were claimed to total ₱ 621.1 million. The generally bullish business atmosphere in Manila after martial law is seen in the stock market, which allegedly reached a peak of ₱ 492 million in February 1974, almost ten times the average volume before martial law.<sup>12</sup>

6. Improved tourism - with improved peace and order and a concentrated program to attract Filipinos living abroad to visit the Philippines, about 246,604 tourists were listed as having visited the Philippines in the year after martial law, an increase of 48 per cent over the previous year. It was estimated by the government that tourists contributed \$66.4 million to the country receipts. The most dramatic increases in tourism seem to have occurred after September 1973, after "Operation Homecoming" (Balikbayan) was launched. Provided vastly reduced homecoming air fares, freedom from taxes and no customs inspection, more than 35,000 Filipinos allegedly returned to the Philippines last year. More than 18,000 of these tourists were claimed to have arrived in the month of December alone. So successful has Balikbayan been, according to the Tourism Authority, that it has been extended beyond its normal dates.<sup>13</sup>

Critics of the martial law government in the Philippines may dispute the figures mentioned above and level their accusations against the propagandists of the present government. It is difficult to question, however, that there was, indeed, a changed atmosphere in the Philippines after martial law. In fact, considering the magnitude of the political changes introduced



after 21 September 1972, if it were not for the generally better performance showed by the sectors of Philippine economy and society mentioned above, it is difficult to believe that general dissatisfaction with the way things were could not have grown beyond control. Perhaps, it was mainly because of the fact that the situation seemed so troubled before martial law. Perhaps, the simplification of governmental machinery and the stifling of dissent really did positively result in change. Whatever the reasons, the Filipino seemed to have decided that the price for the temporary sacrifice of civil liberties was indeed right and that he was willing to wait a little longer to find out if martial law will really change his economic and social well being in the long run. A letter from Manila captures this mood:

For situations such as this, we Filipinos say:  
 "Bahala na". Bahala na is variously translated:  
 "Do not worry", "God will provide", "Let's go  
 for broke". It will take<sup>14</sup> us a bit of time to decide  
 which meaning we intend.

#### The Cons

Aside from the barrage of government publications that sings praises to martial law, there are many information sources that debate the so-called benefits arising from the new regime. Many of these sources are outside the Philippines. Nevertheless, their sources of information are claimed to originate from within the country, where traditions of liberal philosophy and civil liberties refuse to give way.

1. Repression and terrorism - critics of martial law in the Philippines decry the arrest of intellectuals, journalists, and other critics of the government. Estimates of those imprisoned range from eight to twelve thousand. In the three month period after martial law was declared, the Philippine Constabulary admitted that 8,261 had been arrested. Because of censorship, it may never be known how many people were really jailed. Nor is it known how many people are still in jail in the Philippines, though it was estimated that in the first year of martial law, about 11,700 had been jailed. More serious than actual numbers, however, are individual tales of terrorism circulating in the "underground press". One of the more harrowing of these is the case of Lilibosa Hilao, student leader at the City University of Manila, who was allegedly tortured to death by the military. The official military version said she committed suicide.<sup>15</sup>

2. Curtailment of civil liberties - the abolition of Congress, the indefinite postponement of elections, lifting of the writ of habeas corpus, imposition of curfew, making of "rumor mongering" a crime, the existence of lists of subversives, and the control of the mass media by the government and sympathizers are considered too high a cost for promised progress by many. Journalists, especially foreign ones, who wax nostalgic about the freewheeling style of pre-martial law Philippine journalism are bored by the non-news that comes out in Manila's papers daily. Critics complain that there is no freedom from fear. Rumors fly wildly in the absence of concrete information. Many members of the "Camp Crame Alumni Association"

who want to leave the country are not able to travel abroad. Some of them have found it difficult to make a living in the Philippines but they cannot get out. Those sympathetic to the government may say that those facing difficulties now were those who benefitted from the old society, that they knew exactly what they were risking when they decided to go against the government. Still, to these individuals and their families and friends, life is not easy.

3. Higher prices - officially, the Consumer Price Index in Manila was said to have risen from 180.2 in November 1972 to 241.1 in November 1973 (base year, 1965 = 100). Food, however, went up 258.4 and clothing 246.5. To Filipinos, the price of rice is the main barometer of well-being. The government admits that from ₱ 2.57 per ganta in November 1972, a ganta of first class rice went up to ₱ 4.31 in November 1973.<sup>16</sup> What was worse, in June to September, it was impossible to find rice in the market and housewives had to line up for blocks for their rice rations. The government blamed the rice shortage on an international shortage as well as on local hoarders but these reasons were not appreciated by the people who only knew that even if they had the money to buy rice, it was not available in the market. The "energy crisis" also hit the country hard and gasoline was rationed.

4. Muslim insurgency - the spectre of "another Vietnam" in the Philippines has been widely publicized by the international press. For all the claims of the government that economic and

social development in Mindanao is now pacifying the Muslim separatists, the bombing of Jolo after its capture by rebel forces and the persistence of a refugee problem are difficult to keep quiet. Manila papers rarely feature news about the fighting in Mindanao but rumors are rife. For example, everytime there is a "brown out", people in Manila whisper that "they are unloading more casualties at the airport again". The roots of the Muslim insurgency in the Philippines are deep and complex and require a very thorough study. The fact that the Muslims have never really been "pacified" in the history of the Philippines does not lighten the load of the present martial law government in the country. The Muslim question is a problem that will not easily go away, though it may be explained clearly in the future.

5. Slow pace of reforms - while the claims of the present martial law regime are many, those critical of the government easily point to the gap between target and accomplishment, between boast and actual delivery. In many ways, the current Philippine government gets caught in its own dilemma of big promises to keep its momentum going and small accomplishments because of the difficulties of the situation. Land reform is on the top agenda of the new government and there are grandious programs promised for the people. Land reform, however, is an expensive and complex administrative, political and cultural problem and the resources do not simply seem available at

present to accomplish it in a short time.<sup>17</sup> Food production is another area where promises far outstrip performance. The dilemma of the martial law government in the Philippines is that it is trying to accomplish almost instantly what has taken centuries of neglect and problems to fester. If targets can only be realistically set, and the drive for quick results does not lead to grandious promises, perhaps, there won't be too many frustrations. The problem, however, is that having assumed power and promised salvation, the government has to deal in superlatives. This is true of both positive promises and negative sanctions. Thus, there are constant threats often difficult to accomplish: those who did not vote in the referendum will be jailed; tax evaders will be jailed; those caught with illegal firearms will be shot; etc. When these threats are not fulfilled, people lose fear and respect, and the credibility of the regime gets questioned.

6. Domination by foreigners - what sympathizers of the present regime claim as an accomplishment (increased foreign investments) is seen by critics as a destructive policy. Those critical of the increased participation of American and Japanese multi-national corporations in Philippine economic life cite the situation in Latin America where centuries of foreign-dominated trade and commerce has not resulted in indigeneous growth. The theory of "domination", which claims that the

trade relationship between rich countries and poor countries is one between "the shark and the sardine" is cited by critics of martial law. Often, the technocrats mainly responsible for formulating and implementing the foreign trade policies of the Philippines are attacked directly by critics. Thus, Stauffer has written that:

Philippine experts, even if they have largely forgotten their Spanish colonial heritage, should have studied Latin America rather than Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea for a view of the costs from accepting outside dominance and guidance of one's economy. The Latin American experience with its century and a half of "political independence" coupled with economic dependence demonstrates the weakness of attempting to build nations through reliance on foreign markets for products requiring low levels of technology and on foreign control of the sophisticated components used in the domestic economy. The results seem incapable of providing the "stability" foreign investors want in poor nations, and the minimum economic well being and political respect every human has a right to expect in the 20th century.<sup>18</sup>

#### Some Interpretations of Martial Law

To debate the pros and cons of martial law and its significance for Philippine development is futile if such a debate is not placed in the context of Philippine society and history. Fortunately, despite the initial news clamp down and the media censorship still in force, it is quite easy to follow the twists and turns of events related to martial law. The Philippines remains relatively open, with data accessible to and exportable by many researchers. There is an alleged "black list" of journalists and academics who may not be able to enter the country as freely as others but on the whole, things seem remarkably open. President Marcos and his sympathizers, in fact, seem almost

compelled to explain what they have been doing in philosophical, legal and moral terms. There are hints of the academic ideologue one can read between the lines of Today's Revolution: Democracy and Notes on the New Society and there are even promises of two more books by the President, Constitution and Martial Law and A Philippine President's Diary. It is easy to dismiss these publications as propaganda. On the other hand, one wonders why President Marcos and his followers feel it necessary to explain themselves so voluminously.

Amidst the claims and counter-claims, charges and counter-charges, and questions of what is fact and what is fiction, the all important question on the Philippines under martial law is still "what does it all mean"? To what factors can martial law be attributed? What does it portend for future Philippine development, economically and politically?

There is no shortage of "explanations" of what was behind martial law and what is in store for the Philippines because of it. First of all, there are the "conspiratorial" interpretations. To critics of martial law, the blame is squarely placed on the person of President Ferdinand E. Marcos, on his personal need for power and wealth, his political cunning, his needs and drives. Supplementing these types of interpretations are those which link President Marcos to "foreign devils", be they multi-national corporations, the Armed Forces of the United States, the police experts of US AID, or Japanese businessmen.

Conspiratorial theories are also given by supporters of martial law. Among those blamed are Leftists and Rightists both local and foreign, the "oligarchy", Muslim separatists, (again, both local and foreign), "warlords", corrupt politicians, and assorted "subversives", from "Maoists" to "clerico-facists".

A common danger in interpretations of martial law is the tendency to over-simplify and attribute most developments to one set of factors. Certainly, it is difficult to deny that what has happened and what is happening in the Philippines is due to an extremely complex dynamics of events. It has to be accepted that to some lesser or greater degree, some of the factors mentioned by those for and against martial law had a role in the events. However, to attribute such complex processes to simplified sets of factors does not contribute much to understanding what is really going on.

At the risk of falling in the same trap of over-simplification, this paper attempts to provide some interpretations of recent events in the Philippines in the following terms:

1. Recent Philippine events are logical unravellings of main trends in Philippine political life and not a drastic break in Philippine history and traditions;
2. The role of personalities and factions in recent Philippine events is an important element in these trends;
3. Martial law marks a logical extension of a developmental philosophy which favors administrative over political rationality; and, finally,
4. The dynamics of Philippine political processes will create pressures that will most likely lead to the eventual lifting of martial law.



### Political Trends

It is tempting to declare, as others have done, that the imposition of martial law in the Philippines was a drastic break with the past, "a coup [which] destroyed the political institutions of one of the few remaining democracies among the poor nations of the world",<sup>19</sup> or conversely, "a decisive rupture from an old and stricken society".<sup>20</sup> Martial law, because of its drastic impact on the lives of many touched by it personally, is viewed as a beginning or an end. There are reasons, however, to see it as merely a chapter, although a very important one, in Philippine history.

To begin with, this is not the first time that militarily-backed centralized power has been instituted in the Philippines. The Spanish colonial period was a despotic legacy of military and religious dominance. After the "liberating" revolution against Spain, in fact, the first thing that Emilio Aguinaldo proclaimed was a military dictatorship. The American colonizers that took over the Philippine Islands at the turn of the century preached local government but firmly held on to centralized control to get things moving. The Commonwealth government set up in 1935 sought a strong President, that would rule "unencumbered and unembarrassed" by abundant grants of power. The puppet government under the Japanese during World War II was martial. And, as President Marcos tirelessly points out, the old Constitution of the Philippines provided for martial law under troubled times.

Contrasted to these long years of centralized and often military-backed control, the "freedom years" characterized by elections, free speech, constitutional bills of right, and civil liberties are brief, indeed. Perhaps, it may be because of this brevity that there are those who see them as treasured Camelot days. It may be asked, however, if freedom is so fragile and liberty so weak that a declaration of martial law will irrevocably destroy them.

Instead of martial law being a break with the past, there are some authors, in fact, who argue that it is a link with the past. S.P. López, believes that:

The paradox of the New Society is that it aims at the restoration of the traditional values of Filipino society which the modern, urbanized Filipino has come to regard as old-fashioned, outmoded, and rather quaint. It calls for the reconstruction of Filipino society by using as building blocks the ancient virtues of our forefathers: individual dignity, social discipline, obedience to law, rights counterbalanced by responsibility, respect for the rights of others, honesty, industry, patriotism.<sup>21</sup>

Another University of the Philippines faculty member, R.S. Cuyugan, dean of the Asian Center, goes beyond Philippine history and extends the links to all of Asia, viewing recent events in the Philippines as "the Philippine return to Asia".<sup>22</sup>

What happened in September 1972 can be interpreted as the recovering ... the recovery was, in effect, the return to Asian ways -- Asian institutions, modes of decision-making and of forging consensus. Thus, the declaration of martial law and coming into being of the New Society put the Philippines back into the cultural, economic and political mainstream of Asia.

Those who recall more recent, though less pleasant events, compare the present Philippine situation to the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945). Indeed, there are many similarities between the two epochs in Philippine history, some trivial, others seriously momentous. To those critical of martial law, there are zonas (police and military raids on certain zones and the rounding up of opposition elements); pilas (lining up for rice and gasoline rations); backyard gardens (now called the "Green Revolution"); the "underground" (clandestine publications, guerillas) and even "collaborators" (those on the side of the ruling forces). Many of the persons identified with the opposition, in fact, are veterans of the anti-Japanese struggle. Eleuterio Adevoso, Raul Manglapus, Joaquín Rocas, Bonifacio Gillego, and others were men who shared the tortures of Fort Santiago or the tough life in the mountains. To these men, therefore, the struggle may just be continuing a tradition.

As for the technocrats, the academics turned civil servants now serving the New Society, theirs is adherence to a tradition too. American colonization may have introduced rough and tumble electoral politics but many people also recall the stability, efficiency and progress of "Peace Time", the pre-independence era when roads were built, sewers were dug, diseases were eradicated, education was offered, and honest, hard working civil servants in white coats and black ties ran the government. Those days required a reigning Governor General and a Moro "pacification campaign" too -- yes, with its grim tales of American Army atrocities, as well.

Even the young intellectuals waging a "Propaganda Campaign" in forced or self-imposed exile are following a true Filipino tradition. Their manifestoes and broadsides that appeal to restoration of freedom and civil liberties, their stormy meetings and placard bristling demonstrations seem like echoes from an earlier time. How many of these young idealists would become Lunas and del Pilars, Mabinis and Rizals? And how many of them will be remembered, and for what?

Taking a longer historical perspective, therefore, helps in putting in context recent events in the Philippines. Such a long view reveals that such events may be very significant but that they hardly mean the beginning or the end of freedom in the country. There are larger and stronger forces in Philippine history that say, with the ancient poet, "even this shall pass away". One can only hope, of course, that whatever transpires will be for the benefit of the Filipino.

#### Personalities and Factions

One of the main threads in Philippine politics that may shed some light on martial law, is the strong factionalism and adherence to personalistic loyalties that characterize Filipino political behavior. Almost all analysts of Philippine politics have noted the aggregation of political loyalties around individual actors. Bases of aggregation have been kinship to such actors, origin from a specific geographical region, a common language, and other particularistic identities. Political relationships, according to Lande, were structured in dyadic relationships.<sup>23</sup> The "alliances"

among liders and followers formed the nuclei of political machines.<sup>24</sup>

Some authors saw factional political style as a reflection of pluralism and free expresssion of multi-interests. In time, a shaky system of "political rules of the game" evolved, which made elections, parties, legislative deliberations, and politico-administrative contests possible. The tendency to violate the rules of the game, however, was never really forgotten. As noted earlier, the all-or-nothing language of politics might have provided deeper and more realistic indices to what people really felt.

The tranformation of verbal over-kill to actual killings was observed in only a few provinces at first. It is interesting, as observed by a former Executive Secretary to President Marcos, that one of the earliest areas where ballots gave way to bullets was Ilocos, a "hot spot" where casualties became to be expected at election time. Other provinces soon followed -- Cavite, where the Montano and Camerino factions battled; Catanduanes and Albay where the warring factions came from the same family, and the Muslim provinces, where, upon the declaration of martial law, political leaders surrendered armored cars, bazookas, and armalite rifles.

In many of the troubled areas, factionalism and the violence that came to be associated with it, had deep familial roots. The killing of a brother or a relative placed an obligation of revenge on the living. Family feuds fed into political fights, and vice versa. With these strong feelings, political contests

were extremely difficult to conduct under gentlemanly rules. From the blue hills of Kentucky, the island of Sicily, and the tobacco fields of Ilocos, it has been shown that blood and violence create their own rules -- and these rarely conform with peaceful political behavior. Vendettas and all-or-nothing feuds are not the best conditions for peaceful democratic processes.

One hesitates to attribute factionalism and violence to signs of "political decay" in the Philippines. For decay to occur, there must be health first. The fact is, factionalism and violence were never too far from the surface in Philippine politics. The increasing use of arms and private armies had predictable results -- the breaking down of law and order, and the eventual imposition of martial controls in the name of law and order.

Under the conditions of armed conflict and civil disorder that characterized pre-martial law Philippine society, there was a great need for simplifying things. This simplifying process eventually focused on the personality of President Marcos and his family. The vehemence and adulation accorded to President Marcos and his family in the years before and after martial law are hard to explain in other than social-psychological terms. In fact, one can almost say that in view of the confused condition of Philippine politics before martial law, if President Marcos and his family did not exist, somebody would have had to invent them.

From his writings, President Marcos seems singularly aware of this focusing and polarization of views on his person. He begins his "Notes on the New Society" in this way:

Great decisions are made for us as much as we make them ... I am ... accountable to history for September 21, 1972. I cannot escape the sense that events, the thrust of history ... somehow guided my hand to the deed ... behind every man who makes history are forces which blur the distinction between individual initiative and historical necessity ... <sup>25</sup>

The focusing of historical forces on President Marcos was the work of partisans and opponents alike. To his enemies, President Marcos was larger than life -- "the richest man in Asia", "the most crooked Filipino", "the wildest of politicians". His exploits ranged from "how he conned the Con-Con delegates" to his "disassembling of the National Assembly". From his almost legendary physical courage ("more medals than Audie Murphy") to his reputed sexual prowess ("the confessions of Dobie Beams"), President Marcos was a natural for his "super hero" or "heavy" role. To his adherents, President Marcos could do no wrong. His opponents, on the other hand, by attributing so many sins to him, may have created a personality cult in reverse.

It is difficult to guess whether personalism and factionalism as shown in recent Philippine events are "Asian" or even whether they are typical of developing country politics. It was clear in the years immediately prior to martial law, that there was widespread belief that only a strong hand would be able to impose

discipline and control over Philippine events. Almost all the justifications written of martial law point to the anarchy, disorder, violence and confusion of the times. In some ways, the ready acceptance of martial law by many Filipinos might be attributed to this demand for order -- and the larger than life proportions that the supporters and critics of President Marcos created of him may have provided the answer to a specific historical need.

#### The Technocrats

If personalism and factionalism can be termed Asian, one of the main influences on the martial law government in the Philippines today is definitely "imported". This is the idea that a group of trained, skilled, impersonal and rational individuals, divorced from politics, factions and particularistic interests are the instruments by which economic and social development may be achieved. The ideal of an apolitical civil service of good men, selected, trained and promoted strictly according to merit, is an old one. The Chinese mandarins and British colonial civil servants are historical attempts to achieve this ideal. The idea, however, that a classless civil service drawn from all interested persons, selected by systems of examinations and promoted strictly according to skills and competence is a peculiarly American one. It may be closely related to the similar idea that there is a group



of civic-minded citizens in every community who would work for the public welfare from selfless and idealistic concerns and who would not demean themselves or soil their reputations by using public office for private gain.

As the only American colony, the Philippines became the testing ground for these twin ideals of civic politics and a civil service based on merit. Both ideals found convergence in the hope that education was the key to economic and social progress. The accomplishments of the Philippine public school system in the half century of American rule are commendable. Even after independence, the educational establishment became one of the main moulders of public life. With the commercial and industrial sectors not able to flourish as actively as desired, government became the main "industry" to employ the thousands of educated graduates. Education as the main ladder for economic and social mobility did not end in the country -- a system of scholarships and grants (the pensionado system), extended higher education to the United States and, to a limited extent, to Europe. In the early years, when a political career promised both fame and fortune, many of the scholars went into politics. However, as politics became corrupt, soiled and demeaning, many of the scholars turned to academic pursuits, private business, and, eventually, to the civil service.

The philosophical and value premises of the academics turned civil servants who are active in the martial law government in the Philippines at present are those which

reflect the "value-free" and "rational" ideals of American reformers. Implicitly or explicitly, the "technocrats", as they have become more popularly known, abhor the open conflicts and excesses of electoral politics. Philosophically, they are committed to rationalism as an ends-means relationship. Emotionally, they are drawn to the idea of the self-less, objective, meritorious civil servant with his "passion for anonymity" efficiently doing his appointed task. Borrowing from Herbert Simon, most of the technocrats probably believe in the fact-value dichotomy. Political representatives of the people set the goals (values); they as civil servants go about the business of achieving those goals using facts in the best cost-benefit tradition. It does not really matter, in the long run, who sets those goals. An elective chamber or a "constitutional authoritarian" are the same -- they set the course and the technocrats busy themselves with getting there.

Development administration theorists committed to rational problem solving (as well as business administration savants who advocate running government agencies like efficient corporations) will probably cringe at the thought of their ideas being used by strong men, dictators and authoritarian leaders, but the truth is that the military-technocratic alliance is becoming one of the most widely known power bases in most developing countries today. In Peru, Chile, Greece, Nigeria, Indonesia, and now, the Philippines the new power holders are the technocrats. A publication not

overly sympathetic to the technocrats in the Philippines describes the situation in this way:

One of the major effects of martial law in the Philippines was the transfer of power from war-lord politicians ... to a new breed of technocrats who now have a pivotal role in policy formation, both in domestic affairs and international negotiations. These technocrats were almost always invariably drawn from UP or Ateneo products in the middle or late fifties who trained abroad, mostly in the US Ivy League and top universities for their Ph.D's or MBA's and later returned to the Philippines to serve as deans and directors in the major universities as well as consultants to big corporations ... Now they call the shots in the New Society by running the sensitive and powerful offices of the regime such as the Board of Investments, Department of Finance, and the newly created National Economic and Development Authority. They reportedly have no "political clout" and the sole basis of their appointment is their technical expertise.<sup>26</sup>

Prominently mentioned among the "new power holders" are César Virata, secretary of finance (Wharton); Vicente Paterno, chairman of board of investments (Harvard); Gerardo Sicat, director general, NEDA (MIT), Orlando Sacay, assistant secretary for cooperatives (Cornell); Arturo Tangco, secretary of agriculture (Harvard); Onofre D. Córpuz, coordinator for human settlements development (Harvard); Román Cruz, Jr., manager, government service insurance system (Harvard); and others. It credits the technocrats' role in the New Society by saying that "so prominent is the role of these technocrats that the public usually alludes to the 'Harvard Mafia' ... in talking about them". It may be scant consolation to Harvard University

that aside from turning out Arab technocrats who have turned their learning to the oil embargo and the "energy crisis" it is now being credited with Filipino technocrats who hold the powers in a martial regime.

Though many people admire the hard work, dedication, and concrete results achieved by the technocrats, there are also some detractors who see them as servile followers of the powers that be. The resurgence of American and Japanese business dominance in the Philippines is worrying some people, and they attribute this to the technocrats. One criticism charges that "their neo-colonial orientation toward economic development and their willingness to commit the resources of Philippine economy to foreign exploitation" would lead the Philippines to ruin. The charges warn that "their servility to foreign interests and readiness to accommodate foreign domination under the guise of internal economic development should .. be a cause of alarm among Filipinos".<sup>27</sup>

Conversations with the technocrats readily reveal their sincerely felt desire for progress as well as a strong reformist streak. To most of them, the restoration of stability under martial law provides "the chance to do something". With no more Congress and professional politicians, government has become a simple ends-means framework. President Marcos sets the goals, the technocrats suggest the means, and they simply proceed to the optimal way of translating plans to action.

A year and a half under martial law, however, this idealized simple view of politics-free administration is slowly proving to be troublesome. In their private moments, the technocrats admit that their "think tanks" and "do tanks" are not sufficient to achieve the goals they have set -- goals set very high, to begin with, because of high expectations from the people.

In his study of the American presidency, Neustadt noted the expectation of President Eisenhower that as in the army, all he had to do as President was to say "do this, do that" and things will happen.<sup>28</sup> He contrasted this expectation with the realism of Harry Truman, the politician, who commiserated with "poor Ike" because things would not automatically happen. In the Philippines, it is increasingly becoming clear that even with martial law powers, when President Marcos says "do this, do that" things do not necessarily happen. Decrees have been drafted and signed, to be followed in a disconcertingly short time later with amending, clarifying, or even contradictory decrees, implementing orders, or letters of instruction. Orders have been given from the clear vantage point of Malacañang Palace in Manila, but they have been changed, revised and altered as they have rippled away toward the provinces by various cases of miscommunication, partial implementation, ignorance, and acts of commission or omission. It is true that with organizational reform, the lines of authority in the Philippine bureaucracy have

been shortened. Still, the technocrats are encountering a lot of static and noise in their communication and authority lines.

Administrative rationality may have replaced political rationality in the Philippines under martial law but along with it has come about administrative politics as well. In reality, technocrats do not have equal access to the President and this determines their effectiveness in public life. Personal, professional and other rivalries, of course, are usually hidden and smoothened over but they are there. Professional watchers of bureaucratic careers are aware that the meteoric rise of one particular technocrat usually follows a path strewn with sore toes, aching arms and bruised egos. Thus, though open conflicts are rare and there are few shouting matches such as those in past congressional or electoral contests, the tensions and intra-bureaucratic conflicts are there, and they make their particular noises in their peculiar ways.

It is clear that the presence of technocrats in the government of President Marcos has assisted him immensely. In the education-conscious Philippines, all those advanced degrees and academic robes spell knowledge, dedication, civic conscience and performance. The "best brains" of the country are now harnessed by government. Planners and doers have replaced politicians. With very rare exceptions, there is no scandal or any whiff of corruption or dishonesty among the technocrats.

To Filipinos who have been made cynical by the political excesses of yesteryears, this is an unaccustomedly beneficial situation.

#### Prospects for the Future

In the light of the admittedly fragmentary and incomplete analysis of martial law in the Philippines, the logical question to ask is: what is in store for the near future? In this writer's opinion, martial law cannot last too long in the Philippines. There are too many pressures, both within and without the system, that will most likely bring about the lifting of martial law.

One of the strongest sources of pressures is the Church. It is one of the ironies of the Philippine situation that while martial law was declared to allegedly prevent a godless Communist takeover, some of the more recent opposition to the New Society is coming from men of God. In an official government report religious groups critical of the government were dismissed as "clerico-fascists".<sup>29</sup> While it is true that a number of priests have emulated the example of Camilo Torres (the Colombian rebel priest), the roster of people signing open letters critical of the present situation does not warrant the easy dismissal of activities of the religious as mainly coming from rebels.

One of the early critics of martial law was Rev. Pacífico Ortíz, delegate to the Constitutional Convention, former Dean of the Ateneo Law School and Chaplain to the late President

Manuel L. Quezón. Fr. Ortíz, saying "no" to the Constitution which would set up a transition from a presidential to a parliamentary form of government said that ...

....we as delegates, have no right to ask our people to play dice with their future, to gamble with their freedom on a dictatorial experiment. For the transition government we are setting up is not a transition from the Presidential to the Parliamentary; it is a transition from the Presidential to the Dictatorial, to a one-man constitutional Dictatorship. And though we call it transitory, this transition government may not transit at all; it may well become our permanent way of life, as it has become in many of the South American republics ... Silent leges inter arma is the Latin phrase for it - the law stands mute in the midst of arms. In the climate of fear that martial law has brought about, the ancient oracles of freedom and decency and independent judgment are silent ... and lesser men must fall back on their own unaided conscience and reckon by the stars ... <sup>30</sup>

More recently, a group of 23 Protestant and Catholic churchmen under the leadership of Rev. Cirilo A. Rigos, wrote an open letter to Secretary Carlos P. Rómulo, (Foreign Affairs) expressing strong views on Philippine-Japan relations. This letter, dated January 9, 1974, was strongly critical of the possible domination by Japan of the Philippine economy upon signing of the amity treaty between the two countries. <sup>31</sup>

Recent events have reported formal protests from high officials of the Church regarding military raids on convents, universities, and seminaries. Open letters from bishops have been circulated and printed in international media and "underground papers". <sup>32</sup> So far, the government has been able to blame much of religious agitation on "foreign agitators" and



the list of priests arrested show a predominance of Irish and Italian names. There are, however, many young Filipino priests and nuns who have been energized by the activism among students and young professionals before martial law. With the support of their superiors, these religious men and women can wield tremendous pressures which the military-technocratic alliance would not be able to ignore.

Another pressure which may result in the lifting of martial law may very well be the military itself. One of the main items of speculation on the future of the Philippines is what role the military will play in a long term martial regime. There is unanimity that before martial law, the military played only a minor role in the country's politics. The main interest of the military in the past, according to many observers, was to perpetuate themselves. Thus, Lachica expressed the view that if the Huks did not exist in Central Luzon, the military would have had to invent them -- especially at budget time.<sup>33</sup>

President Marcos, in his pronouncements since martial law, has consistently expressed his contempt at the demeaning of the military and has rallied to their side. Thus, in a recent publication, he wrote:

In the complacency and arrogance of the past, our political elite had reduced the annual testimony of the defense establishment before the Philippine Congress into a comic opera. The media elite, on the other hand, had their so-called "budgetary Huks", or Huks concocted for the purpose of increasing the

Department of National Defense budget. But it had always been a source of scandal for me that the very Congress which expended the people's money in indiscriminate investigations of "subversives" in various organizations was the very same Congress which exposed the military to ridicule whenever the latter testified about the state of rebellion in the country.<sup>34</sup>

President Marcos now sees that " ... the perception of the armed forces about the state of rebellion was more acute than that of the civilian authority ... "; " ... it was the armed forces that offered lives in the fight against the insurgents ... ".<sup>35</sup> The President has expressed his decision to rely more and more on the military to maintain peace and order and to prevent any "backsliding" to the bad habits of the past.

So far, the military has been loyal to the government and its actions have been remarkably free of violence and abuses. Like the technocrats, military officers seem genuinely imbued with a reformist intent and a "let's get the job done" motivation. It is difficult to predict, however, what continued reliance on the military would do. Already, there are accusations of favors being given to the army to maintain its loyalty. With the increase of such criticisms, it is difficult to expect that the military would keep its cool.

Critics of the increasing reliance on the military to firm up martial law fear a Latin American type dictatorship dependent on military strength. There is also fear of abuses on the part of the military, and the growing need to appease the

military's needs. Thus, an underground paper published in North America charges that even private property is being "grabbed" by President Marcos for distribution to soldiers. An item in the Times-Chronicle-Free Press ("published ... to keep alive the spirit ... of the mass media suppressed by the Marcos dictatorship") charges that "Carmel Farms, ... owned by a critic of the President" had been confiscated by the Government through Proclamation Decree No. 293 and was given away to officers and men of the presidential guard battallion.<sup>36</sup>

Unlike pressures from religious groups which may work toward lifting of martial law to achieve something, pressures emanating from the question of the military may result in the same end by the need to prevent something. Judging from Latin American, African and other cases where authoritarian leaders have had to rely on the military for support, a time usually comes when the role of the military has to be counter-balanced by another group, perhaps, the religious, citizen groups, local government officials, etc. When the balancing act becomes too difficult, as it eventually and inevitably becomes, authoritarian leaders usually shift to a broader base of power. From present indications, this may be what is in store for the Philippines, where demands for legitimacy and legality have remained very strong.

A careful examination of the course that President Marcos has taken so far makes for bright hopes that martial law will be

ended earlier than anticipated. It is noticeable, for example, that the President has been almost painstakingly careful in justifying his action in a legal-constitutional manner rather than relying mainly on naked power or brute force. The Old Constitution and the New Constitution are constantly referred to in almost all pronouncements. Plebiscites and referanda are used, both to gain support, legitimize actions, and show political power and mobilization skills. At any time that the power holders in the Philippines want to, there is the structure of a National Assembly which may be convened as a formal legislature. The parliamentary form of government is also there to lend legitimacy to President Marcos' continuance in power.

In the final analysis, though, the forces that will probably lift martial law and restore some semblance of normalcy to Philippine politics would be a combination of external pressures, internal threats, and hard earned progress. Continued criticism of President Marcos and the martial law government may stiffen resistance but it may also firm up the government's resolve to achieve progress to make it possible and safe to shift to a less controlled governmental structure. External pressures from various sectors, especially from the United States, may also achieve results. After all, the continued existence of martial law and denial of civil liberties in the only American colony and "show window of democracy in Asia" is a

constant embarrassment to America. It is the Filipino people, though, who will eventually have to determine their own future. Knowing the values and traditions of the Filipinos, their sense of justice and love of freedom, it is almost unthinkable that martial law will be their legacy for all time.

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## Notes

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